



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contact:

Dr Ehsan Latif, Tobacco Control

Phone: (+44) 131 226 2428

Email: elatif@theunion.org
communications@theunion.org

**The Union marks World No Tobacco Day as a critical point
in the “Year of the Lung”**

Paris, 28 May 2010 – The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) is marking **World No Tobacco Day**, 31 May 2010, as a critical point in the 2010: Year of the Lung campaign. Studies show that 50% of all deaths from lung disease are linked to tobacco use.

“Strengthening tobacco control is the single most important action we can take to improve global lung health”, said **Dr Nils E Billo, Executive Director of The Union** and chair of the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS), which is sponsoring the Year of the Lung. *“Tobacco is a leading cause of preventable death and kills 5 million men, women and children each year”.*

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), if tobacco control is not improved, the death rate will increase from 5 million to 8 million by 2030, and 520 million people will die from tobacco use in the next 50 years.

The Union has been active in tobacco control for 25 years, providing technical assistance, education and research to countries seeking to pass and implement smokefree legislation, develop smokefree policies, train health care professionals in smoking cessation techniques and build public awareness of the health consequences of tobacco use. Since 2007, The Union has also been a partner in the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use, a US\$ 375 million initiative funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

- Through its regional offices in Europe, Latin America, South-East Asia, the Middle East, and the Asia Pacific, The Union is working with governments in 14 of the world’s top tobacco-using countries to develop stronger tobacco control laws.
- As co-manager of the Bloomberg Initiative grants programme (with the US-based Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids), The Union has given grants to 73 tobacco control organisations and governments in 27 countries to develop tobacco control interventions since 2007.
- A series of technical and management courses designed specifically to build the capacity of tobacco control organisations has been offered in 14 countries since 2007.
- A wide range of resources for tobacco control advocates is now available for free through The Union’s website www.tobaccofreeunion.org. These include technical guides for establishing smokefree health care facilities, schools and sporting events; case studies of smokefree cities; economic reports; fact sheets and other information.

The WHO theme for this year’s World No Tobacco Day is “Gender and Tobacco: with an emphasis on marketing to women”.

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“In many countries, women have not traditionally used tobacco, and the tobacco industry is targeting them as an untapped market,” said Dr Billo. “The Union is committed to opposing these efforts and to reversing the pandemic of disease caused by tobacco”.

Although currently accounting for only 20 per cent of the world’s smokers, women are increasingly vulnerable to the tobacco epidemic. The tobacco industry falsely markets tobacco use as sophisticated, glamorous and liberating. Consequently, as rates of tobacco use among men start to decline in some countries, use among women is growing. Chewing tobacco, shisha and alternate forms of tobacco are also increasingly popular among women.

Globally, women are also more vulnerable to the dangers of second-hand smoke: 64% of deaths due to second-hand smoke occur in women, accounting for 384,000 female deaths each year.

“In order to save women from the tobacco epidemic, it’s necessary for governments to ban tobacco advertising and implement smokefree policies,” said Dr Ehsan Latif, acting Director of The Union’s Tobacco Control Department. “The Union also supports other important policy measures, such as raising taxes on all forms of tobacco and warning about the dangers of tobacco use.”

To mark World No Tobacco Day, The Union is sponsoring a range of events in low- and middle-income countries, organised by the Bloomberg grantees.

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For more information about World No Tobacco Day, please visit:

<http://www.who.int/tobacco/wntd/2010/announcement/en/index.html>

To learn more about the tobacco epidemic and tobacco control:

- WHO Report of the Global Tobacco Epidemic 2009 www.who.int/tobacco/mpower/2009/en/index.html
- The Tobacco Atlas: www.TobaccoAtlas.org
- Tobacco control resources from The Union: www.tobaccofreeunion.org

About The Union

The mission of the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) is to bring innovation, expertise, solutions and support to address health challenges in low- and middle-income populations. Founded in 1920, The Union today is both a non-profit institute with five scientific departments and 14 offices worldwide and a federation of close to 3,000 organisations and individuals who are committed to the same goals. The Union headquarters are in Paris, and offices serve the Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America and South-East Asia regions. Its scientific departments focus on tuberculosis, HIV, lung health and non-communicable diseases, tobacco control and research; and each engages in research, provides technical assistance and offers training and other capacity-building activities leading to health solutions for the poor.

- To learn more about The Union, please visit www.theunion.org
- To learn more The Union’s Department of Tobacco Control: www.tobaccofreeunion.org
- To learn more about the Bloomberg Grants: www.tobaccocontrolgrants.org

About Year of the Lung 2010

The Year of the Lung 2010 is a campaign launched by the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) to build awareness of the essential role the lungs play in health and the toll taken by lung diseases. For more information, please visit www.yearofthelung.org